United Nations E/CN.3/2019/28

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
20 December 2018

Original: English

Statistical Commission
Fiftieth session
5–8 March 2019
Item 4 (f) of the provisional agenda*
Items for information: statistical capacity development

Statistical capacity development

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, which was prepared in accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2018/227 and past practices, provides an overview of the recent activities undertaken by the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat in support of the efforts of countries to strengthen their national statistical capacity so as to better respond to the data challenges resulting from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The report also provides information on collaborative efforts for synchronizing initiatives and leveraging partnerships and coordination in the area of statistical capacity development, as well as emerging strategic frameworks. The Statistical Commission is invited to take note of the report.

* E/CN.3/2019/1

18-21585 (E) 040119

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I. Introduction

1. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development [1] brought increased attention to the need to strengthen the statistical capacity of developing countries to measure, monitor and report on the Sustainable Development Goals, including the associated targets and indicators. The 2030 Agenda explicitly requests that Member States enhance, by 2020, their capacity development support to developing countries with the purpose of increasing significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.

2. The global indicator framework for the monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets presents a tremendous challenge to producers of official statistics. Countries must fulfil the new data demands arising from the 2030 Agenda, including defining national targets and indicators, in order to implement it. Countries need to develop and adapt their national statistical systems to respond to those demands and put in place streamlined processes to ensure the timely production of official statistics.

3. The Cape Town Global Action Plan (CTGAP) for Sustainable Development Data, launched during the first United Nations World Data Forum in January 2017, identified the gaps in national statistics programmes and statistical coordination in response to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Action Plan thus serves as a road map for the capacity development efforts of the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat and other international, regional and national agencies involved in the production of official statistics.

4. The present report provides an overview of the capacity development activities undertaken by the Statistics Division as part of its Regular Programme for Technical Cooperation as well as recent and ongoing Development Account and donor-funded projects. Additional details on the Division's capacity development initiatives in specific substantive areas such as national accounts, demographic and social statistics or environmental economic accounting are provided in domain-specific reports submitted to the Statistical Commission.

II. Implementation of the capacity development programme in the period 2017–2018

5. In the period 2017–2018, the Statistics Division organized 97 workshops and seminars and 24 expert group meetings, at which 3,250 professionals shared experiences and received training (see table 1). During that period, the Statistics Division engaged for the first time in a series of e-learning courses on topics from different statistical domains. In total, 35 e-learning courses were conducted and 2,470 participants were trained.

6. In addition, 185 individual fellowships were awarded to national statisticians and geospatial information experts from developing countries to enable them to attend 29 regional and international meetings.

[1] General Assembly resolution 70/1.

Table 1
Number of events and participants, 2017 and 2018

	Workshops and seminars		*Expert group meetings*		*Study visits*		*e-learning courses*	
Year	*Number of events*	*Participants*	*Number of events*	*Participants*	*Number of events*	*Participants*	*Number of events*	*Participants*
2017	57	1 285	13	732	16	94	11	1 299
2018	40	827	11	406	13	91	24	1 171
Total	**97**	**2 112**	**24**	**1 138**	**29**	**185**	**35**	**2 470**

7. In table 2, the themes of the events held are broken down into five broad categories, namely (a) demographic and social statistics; (b) economic statistics, such as international trade, economic globalization, tourism, energy and industrial statistics, as well as national accounts; (c) environment statistics and environmental-economic accounting; (d) events related to Sustainable Development Goal indicators; and (e) geospatial information management.[2]

Table 2
Number of workshops, expert group meetings and seminars, by theme

Year	*Demographic and social statistics*	*Economic statistics (trade, globalization, tourism, energy, industry, national accounts)*	*Environment statistics and environmental-economic accounting*	*Sustainable Development Goal indicators and general statistics*	*Geospatial information management*
2017	18	15	19	12	6
2018	12	10	13	12	4
Total	**30**	**25**	**32**	**24**	**10**

A. Regular Programme for Technical Cooperation

8. The Regular Programme for Technical Cooperation (RPTC),[3] supports developing countries in their capacity development efforts, especially those geared towards achieving strategic area 3 of the Cape Town Global Action Plan: strengthening of basic statistical activities and programmes. The capacity development activities of the Statistics Division under the Regular Programme draw substantively from the normative work of the Statistical Commission and respond to the policy guidance and programmes of action agreed at the sessions of the Commission.

9. In the period 2017–2018, following the outcomes of the dialogue on development indicators and the adoption by the Statistical Commission of the Cape Town Global Action Plan and relevant international statistical standards, the Statistics Division's capacity development efforts focused on two key areas: (a) strengthening the national statistical capacities to measure, monitor, assess and report on progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals through the use of indicators; and (b) enhancing the modernization of national statistical systems, taking into account the recommendations of the Commission on the data revolution and the use of new technologies and big data for official statistics, including geospatial information and its integration with statistical data. Efforts related to those two areas involved activities supporting the implementation of the 2020 World Population and Housing

[2] The groupings do not include the e-learning courses conducted by the Statistics Division.
[3] Established by the General Assembly in its resolution 58 (I) of 14 December 1946.

Census Programme, civil registration and vital statistics systems, the System of National Accounts, the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting and the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics (FDES), among others. By organizing capacity development activities relating to the use of big data and new technologies for official statistics and in the area of geospatial information management, the Division aimed at further advancing the development and use of geospatial data and tools to support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and related global agendas.

10. The most common capacity development activities funded by the Regular Programme for Technical Cooperation have been (a) the organization of regional and subregional training workshops and seminars by the Statistics Division alone or in partnership with the regional commissions and other international and regional partner organizations and specialized agencies; (b) the provision of advisory services by the Division's four interregional advisers (in the areas of census-taking, geospatial information management, statistical training and capacity development and the organization of the national statistical systems) and by short-term experts, both staff members and consultants, as resource persons and trainers; and (c) the provision of fellowships, short-term training sessions, study tours and on-the-job training for national statisticians and national geospatial information experts from developing countries to enable them to upgrade and strengthen their knowledge and skills in the areas of statistics and geographical information management and to establish regional and international networks.

11. The Statistics Division organized more than 80 workshops and seminars in the period, and its staff members also contributed to the successful conduct of many other capacity development events, organized and funded by the regional commissions and other entities, by acting as resource persons in their specific domains of expertise. The descriptions below refer to events organized by the Division.

12. With regard to civil registration and vital statistics systems, developing countries continued to receive support and training on the implementation of the *Principles and Recommendations for a Vital Statistics System, Revision 3*,[4] adopted by the Statistical Commission in 2014, especially through a newly released handbook. Workshops aimed at promoting the revised set of contemporary standards for civil registration and vital statistics, as well as developing and maintaining a holistic approach to civil registration, vital statistics and identity management, were organized in Colombia (October 2017), Viet Nam (November 2017) and Morocco and Tunisia (March 2018) in close cooperation with and support from the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Health Organization, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Economic Commission for Africa and the non-governmental organization Vital Strategies. The workshops, which brought together a civil registrar, an official statistician and a public health professional from each country, covered 40 countries in Asia and Latin America, thereby ensuring that more than 120 participants had the opportunity to grasp the intricacies of the revised methodological framework for civil registration and vital statistics and interoperability with identity management.

13. For the 2020 World Population and Housing Census Programme, significant efforts were taken to prepare for its implementation through the preparation and launch of a revised set of international standards and the Handbook on the Management of Population and Housing Censuses (revision 2). A series of workshops aimed at training census managers and census methodologists were held during the reporting period in Zambia (March 2017), Nigeria (May 2017), the United Republic of Tanzania (June 2017), Georgia (April 2018), Sri Lanka (May 2018) and Malaysia

[4] Statistical Papers, Series M, No. 19/Rev.3 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.13.XVII.10).

(June 2018). The workshops, conducted with full support and cooperation from the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the United Nations Population Fund and the Economic Commission for Africa, covered more than 50 countries and trained 140 population and housing census professionals.

14. With regard to the System of National Accounts (SNA), developing countries in almost every region received support and training on the implementation of the 2008 SNA and supporting statistics, which had been mandated by the Statistical Commission at its fortieth session following the adoption of the 2008 SNA. Workshops and seminars on various aspects of the 2008 SNA and its supporting statistics were organized in Lebanon (October 2017), Brazil (September 2018), China (September and November 2018) and Turkey (October 2018). The workshops and seminars were attended by relevant officials from the national statistical agencies, central banks and other government agencies. In addition, work began in 2018 with the Economic Commission for Africa with regard to the development and delivery of National Accounts e-learning modules in Africa.

15. As part of the implementation programme for the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA), a regional workshop focusing on energy and air emission accounting and its contribution to policy design and decision-making was held in Antigua (May 2017) in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. A blended learning initiative was also organized on the SEEA Central Framework in Belarus (January 2018) in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Europe. The blended learning consisted of two phases: first, a mandatory online training course, and second, an in-person workshop. The in-person workshop provided an opportunity for the participants to explore topics in more depth, complete hands-on exercises and formulate draft action plans for SEEA implementation.

16. For the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics, regional workshops on the Framework were organized in Gabon (November 2017) and Lebanon (November 2018) that aimed at imparting to statisticians from national statistical offices and experts from selected ministries of the environment or equivalent institutions detailed knowledge and understanding of contemporary approaches to environment statistics, allowing them to identify gaps and deficiencies in environmental data in order to improve the production of regular, accurate and reliable environment statistics. Climate change statistics and indicators were also discussed, in accordance with the Statistical Commission's mandate that a global set of climate change statistics and indicators be developed. In addition, data collection of environment statistics and environment-related indicators were also addressed.

17. With regard to energy statistics, as part of the ongoing implementation of the International Recommendations for Energy Statistics (IRES), a workshop was organized in Malaysia (November 2017) with the Energy Commission of Malaysia. The workshop was attended by more than 50 participants from eight countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations region. In addition, a workshop on energy and environment indicators was organized in cooperation with the Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean in Guatemala (January 2018) to train participants in a specific methodology for the compilation of Sustainable Development Goal indicators in those domains. More than 50 participants were trained in that workshop.

18. For international merchandise trade statistics, trade in services statistics and tourism statistics, the Statistics Division organized workshops in Maldives (April 2017), the Philippines (June 2017), China (September 2017) and Trinidad and Tobago (May 2018) with funding from its statistical revenue account. Using that account, the Division assists developing countries in improving the quality, availability and

dissemination of their official trade statistics for inclusion in the Division's databases, such as the UN Comtrade database, by regularly organizing regional training workshops and awarding fellowships.

19. Traditionally, fellowships under the Regular Programme for Technical Cooperation have been provided to national statisticians and national geospatial information experts from developing countries to enable them to attend regional and international meetings organized by partner organizations. In the period 2017–2018, fellowships were provided to enable participation in meetings of the Oslo Group on Energy Statistics, the Expert Group on Business Registers, the London Group on Environmental Accounting, the Washington Group on Disability Statistics, the International Cartographic Conference, the World Statistics Congress, the International Open Data Conference and others.

B. Development Account projects

20. Resources under the Regular Programme can meet only a limited proportion of the demand of countries for technical assistance. The activities often entail the provision of initial assistance, which is subsequently augmented through projects financed from external budgetary resources, trust funds or the Development Account. The Development Account is a capacity development programme of the Secretariat aimed at enhancing the capacities of developing countries in the priority areas of the United Nations development agenda.

21. In the period 2017–2018, the Statistics Division marked the successful completion of two Development Account projects (on the Sustainable Development Goals and on environment statistics and integrated environmental-economic accounting), the continuation of one Development Account project (on statistics and data) and the launch of two new projects on migration and geospatial information management.

22. The three-year project on "Enhancing national statistical capacity to measure, monitor and report on progress on achieving post-2015 goals and targets for sustainable development" was concluded in June 2018. The project was implemented in six countries (three in Asia (Cambodia, the Philippines and Viet Nam) and three in Africa (Ethiopia, Rwanda and Uganda)) in collaboration with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and the Economic Commission for Africa, and with other partners such as the African Development Bank and PARIS21.

23. As part of the project, a detailed statistical capacity gap assessment was conducted in all six countries. The assessments involved consultations with data providers and statistics producers throughout each national statistical system. The assessments provided an evaluation of their current and potential statistical capacity to compile the global Sustainable Development Goal indicators and identified their dependency on external support and need for additional resources and technical assistance on the level of individual Goals and indicators. The results of the project and the tools developed during the project were shared with other countries in two regional workshops in the Philippines (November 2017) and Ethiopia (May 2018).

24. The three-year project on "Supporting Member States in developing and strengthening environment statistics and integrated environmental-economic accounting for improved monitoring of sustainable development" was concluded in 2017 with several outputs, including national and regional environment statistics publications and a compilation of pilot environmental accounts, as well as national action plans in environment statistics and in environmental-economic accounting. The project aimed at addressing the technical and institutional barriers to the establishment of routinely produced environment statistics and environmental-

economic accounts at the national level. The structure of the project contained two modules. Module A, which included five participating countries from the East African Community subregion (Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania), aimed at strengthening national capacities to produce environment statistics and will be based on the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics and its tools. Module B aimed at the implementation of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting in four countries in two subregions: Kenya and Uganda in Africa, and Malaysia and Indonesia in Asia. Project implementation intensified during 2017 with the conduct of national and regional workshops in the project countries, as well as the provision of remote technical assistance.

25. A $10 million Development Account project, the "Programme for Statistics and Data", which seeks to strengthen national statistical systems for the follow-up and review of the Sustainable Development Goals, including by addressing specific data gaps, is currently under implementation. The project is being implemented by the Statistics Division in cooperation with all regional commissions, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat).

26. The Programme for Statistics and Data is structured according to four pillars: means of implementation, environment statistics and indicators, social and demographic statistics and indicators, and economic statistics and indicators. The implementation started gradually during the fourth quarter of 2016. Most activities for the four pillars have kicked off with regional and subregional activities and then progressively focused on country missions, national training workshops, the development of specific guidelines, the collection of good practices and the development of online training courses. For example, four training workshops on the use of new data sources (satellite data, mobile phone data, scanner data and social media data, respectively) for official statistics were organized by the Statistics Division in November 2017 under the Development Account. The training was conducted by the members of the Global Working Group on Big Data for Official Statistics.

27. Initially, the Programme was foreseen to gradually wrap up and conclude with a series of subregional and regional workshops by the end of 2019. The midterm evaluation, conducted by an external evaluator and concluded in November 2018, highlighted that the project is progressing well and that its implementation is broadly on track despite the delay in the inception of the Programme. On the basis of the outcomes and recommendations provided in the midterm evaluation report, it has been decided to extend the Programme by a year (to the end of 2020) with additional funding of $1.5 million.

28. A new project to strengthen the "Collection and use of international migration data in the context of the 2030 Agenda" was launched to run during the period from 2018 to 2021. The project is led by the Statistics Division, in collaboration with the United Nations Population Division, the Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration. Major outputs of the project include: (a) a set of guidelines for producing migration-relevant Sustainable Development Goal indicators; and (b) capacity development activities for countries in Asia and Latin America to promote the adoption of international standards for migration statistics and the production of data in line with migration-relevant Sustainable Development Goal indicators. In 2018, needs assessment missions were carried out in two project countries (Georgia and Jordan). The third needs assessment mission will be carried

out in the Philippines in January 2019, followed by a regional workshop for Asian countries in February 2019.

29. A second project launched in 2018 addresses "Strengthening geospatial information management in developing countries towards implementing the 2030 Agenda" and is projected to run during the period from 2018 to 2021. The project will focus on improving and strengthening the national geospatial information management capacities of developing countries in two beneficiary regions, namely, Africa and Asia and the Pacific. The project contributes towards improving the timeliness, availability and accessibility of geospatial information at all levels by national geospatial information authorities, thus improving and strengthening national geospatial information management and systems.

C. Donor-funded projects

30. In the period 2017–2018, the Statistics Division continued the implementation of donor-funded projects on evidence and data for gender equality, disability statistics, environmental-economic accounting, monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals and geospatial information management.

31. The Evidence and Data for Gender Equality (EDGE) initiative continued to be implemented by the Statistics Division and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). A key deliverable, the United Nations Guidelines for Producing Statistics on Asset Ownership from a Gender Perspective, was finalized and published. Five regional workshops were organized, in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, in Italy (November 2017), the Philippines (December 2017), Georgia (June 2018), Ethiopia (July 2018) and Chile (August 2018), to present the key recommendations proposed in the Guidelines. The workshops benefited from the participation of a number of experts and representatives from national statistical offices. Furthermore, under the EDGE initiative, a technical report on measuring entrepreneurship from a gender perspective was finalized and an e-learning course was developed to ensure the wide dissemination and use of the EDGE methodology.

32. The project on "Strengthening disability statistics in the era of the post-2015 development agenda", funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia, continued to be implemented through the organization of three regional meetings in Oman (March 2017), Kazakhstan (June 2017) and Santiago (June 2017) on disability statistics in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. That brought the total number of regional meetings that have been organized since 2016 to six. The main objectives of the regional meetings, which were organized in collaboration with the regional commissions of the United Nations, were to enhance the sharing of national experiences and practices in the measurement of disability and foster discussions among national statisticians and policy experts on national data needs for monitoring inclusive development. The Statistics Division is also coordinating the revision of the Guidelines and Principles for the Development of Disability Statistics, and organized a meeting of experts in 2017 to initiate the process.

33. The project on "Natural Capital Accounting and Valuation of Ecosystem Services" was launched in 2017 by the Statistics Division together with UNEP, the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the European Union. The project, which is funded by the European Union, aims to assist the five participating partner countries, namely Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa, to advance the knowledge agenda on environmental and ecosystem accounting. It will initiate pilot testing of the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting Experimental

Ecosystem Accounting (SEEA EEA) with a view to improving the management of natural biotic resources, ecosystems and their services at the national level and mainstreaming issues of biodiversity and ecosystems into policy planning and implementation.

34. The project will review policy demands, data availability and measurement practices in order to advance and mainstream natural capital accounting and will initiate pilot ecosystem accounts in each of the five strategic partner countries. The following work streams will be carried out during the implementation of the project from 2017–2020: (a) the development of a national plan and selection of ecosystem accounts, in physical and monetary terms, based on national priorities, in each of the partner countries; (b) the development of guidelines and methodologies that contribute to the national implementation of the project and the global research agenda in the context of SEEA EEA; (c) the development of a set of indicators in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Aichi Targets and other international initiatives; (d) contributions to the alignment between SEEA and corporate sustainability reporting; (e) increasing awareness of natural capital accounting; (f) enhancing capacity-building and knowledge-sharing as a way to enlarge the community of practitioners on natural capital accounting; and (g) scenario analysis on how different policy choices impact ecosystem services.

35. The project on "Monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals" was launched in 2017 by the Statistics Division with support from the Department for International Development (DfID) of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to make the Sustainable Development Goal indicators available to the broadest possible audience and to strengthen the capacity of countries in the compilation and use of the indicators. It covers 20 countries across Africa and Asia, 9 of which participated in the previous project on "Improving the collation, availability and dissemination of national development indicators, including [Millennium Development Goal] indicators", which ran from 2009 to 2015.

36. The main project activities are to support the pilot countries in the development of national strategies for monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals and the creation or upgrading of national data and metadata platforms of Goal indicators, and to engage users of the Sustainable Development Goal data. Deliverables on a global level are a Sustainable Development Goal data and visualization platform that provides comparisons between global and national datasets and the establishment of an automated data exchange based on the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) standard. In 2017, two meetings to kick off the project were organized for the Africa and Asia regions in Ethiopia (May 2017) and Thailand (June 2017), respectively. Following those meetings, individual country missions have been conducted to assist national statistical offices in the preparation of Sustainable Development Goal monitoring implementation plans and produce metadata for the national Goal indicators, and to set up pilot data exchange using new data structure standards agreed by a SDMX-Sustainable Development Goal working group under the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators. In addition, the project is providing assistance to countries with regard to integrating open data and data interoperability principles in the development of the national Sustainable Development Goal platforms.

37. The statistical capacity-building and geospatial information management project funded by the Government of China was extended for a further five years to cover the period from 2018 to 2022. The project will continue to provide support and capacity development to developing countries' national geospatial and statistical systems. In 2018, capacity development workshops were conducted in Tonga (April 2018), Ethiopia (April 2018) and Kenya (planned for December 2018) on a number of different geospatial areas including data licensing, legal and policy frameworks,

fundamental data themes and measuring the Sustainable Development Goals. An expert group meeting was conducted to better understand the issues and challenges related to disaggregation by geographic location and the availability of satellite Earth observations data streams for the National Statistical System in the production of indicators to measure the Sustainable Development Goals.

38. The Statistics Division continues the implementation of the statistical capacity-building for China and other developing countries project funded by the Government of China. During the period 2017–2018, the Division, in collaboration with the National Bureau of Statistics of China, organized six international workshops and meetings in a few areas, such as industrial statistics, statistical training, SEEA, Sustainable Development Goal indicators, supply and use tables and digital economy, resulting in the training of over 600 statisticians worldwide. In response to the need for the strategic professional development of national statisticians, the project carried out technical advisory missions, sponsored the short-term work of national statisticians in international organizations and awarded fellowships to attend international seminars and conferences. The project has greatly supported the efforts of countries, primarily in the Asia-Pacific region, to strengthen their national statistical capacity so as to better respond to the data challenges of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

39. A new fund was made available to the Statistics Division by the Government of Japan to support building the statistical capacity of developing countries to measure, monitor and report on the Sustainable Development Goals. In 2018, that fund supported the organization of two workshops, one on quality in statistics for the Goals (April 2018), and another on gender statistics as part of the Seventh Global Forum on Gender Statistics (November 2018), both of which were held in Japan. A number of fellowships were also financed through the fund for national statisticians from developing countries to attend certain high-level events throughout the year.

40. Within the context of those donor-funded projects, the Statistics Division expresses its gratitude to the Governments of Australia, China, Japan and the United Kingdom, and to its partner organizations, the European Commission, Eurostat, the World Bank, UNEP, UN-Women and others, for their support of its capacity development programmes, and is looking forward to strong support and collaboration in the years to come.

III. Other coordination efforts for capacity development

A. Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data

41. The Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data was informally launched at the first United Nations World Data Forum, held in Cape Town on 15 January 2017, and then adopted by the Statistical Commission at its forty-eighth session in March 2017. The Action Plan provides the framework for the discussion, planning, implementation and evaluation of statistical capacity development pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Action Plan was developed by the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (HLG-PCCB).

42. The implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan will address gaps in national statistics and statistical coordination identified in response to the 2030 Agenda. Such gaps must be addressed to better enable the use of country-generated statistics in the calculation of global Sustainable Development Goal indicators. However, the guidance provided by the Action Plan is not restricted to capacity

development for Sustainable Development Goal indicators alone. Rather, the goal is to strengthen the national statistical systems so that they can be most responsive to statistical needs to achieve the 2030 Agenda and beyond. As such, the Action Plan serves as guidance for the development of a capacity development strategy and the planning of future capacity development activities at the Statistics Division.

B. Dubai declaration

43. At the second United Nations World Data Forum, held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, on 24 October 2018, a declaration was agreed to further support the implementation of the Cape Town Global Action Plan. The declaration called for the establishment of an innovative funding mechanism, open to all stakeholders under United Nations membership oversight, that is able to respond in a fast and efficient manner to the priorities of national data and statistical systems, with a goal to mobilize both domestic and international funds and activate partnerships and funding opportunities to strengthen the capacity of national data and statistical systems. The funding mechanism, entirely demand driven, is to be created under the mandate of the Statistical Commission and operate under the guidance of representatives of national statistical systems and different data and donor communities who will support the decision-making on operational modalities and on raising resources to address the data needs for the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

C. Global Network of Institutions for Statistical Training

44. The Cape Town Global Action Plan identifies statistical capacity development as an essential action area for achieving the scope and intent of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. There has also been a long-felt need to harmonize the training offerings of various institutions and maximize their outreach to ensure that they are delivered in a more efficient and cost-effective manner.

45. As a result, the Statistics Division has held numerous consultations with a wide range of stakeholders on the establishment of a network of international and regional institutions that provide training in official statistics. At a meeting on statistical training held in Beijing (September 2017), representatives of international and regional institutions engaged in statistical training and representatives from national statistical offices from several countries overwhelmingly supported the establishment of a network to be known as the Global Network of Institutions for Statistical Training (GIST). The Network was formally established in January 2018, and its first meeting took place in the margins of the forty-eighth session of the Statistical Commission (March 2018), where the founding and advisory group members of GIST discussed the way forward and expanded the Network membership to include additional entities. Currently, the Network consists of 21 members – 16 regional and international training institutes, and 5 countries whose national statistical offices have statistical training centres that provide training beyond their own national borders – and it continues to advance its work in the area of training in official statistics.

D. Restructuring of the Statistics Division

46. In April 2018, the Statistics Division was restructured to better respond to the demands of the data needs for the monitoring of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In addition to three substantive divisions, which grouped all social and demographic statistics, all economic statistics and all environment-related statistics

(plus geospatial information), two branches were created with overarching responsibilities: the Development Data and Outreach Branch (DDOB) and the newly formed Data Innovation and Capacity Branch (DICB). Part of the work programme of the Data Innovation and Capacity Branch is to evaluate and coordinate the capacity development activities of the Statistics Division and ensure increased coherence among the statistical capacity development activities of the Statistics Division and other entities. The Data Innovation and Capacity Branch also pursues coordination of modern technologies and methods for the production of statistics and for the delivery of capacity development activities.